

CONFIDENTIAL PTQ5823

PAGE 01 HARARE 00930 01 OF 04 061550Z
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FM AMEMBASSY HARARE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 HARARE 000930

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PAGE 02 HARARE 00930 01 OF 04 061550Z
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E.O. 12958: DECL 03/06/11
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PINS](#) [PINR](#) [ZI](#) [MDC](#)
SUBJECT: MOVEMENT FOR DEMOCRATIC CHANGE LEADERSHIP TAKES
STOCK OF PARTY DEFICIENCIES AND CONCRETE STEPS TO
ADDRESS THEM

REFS: A) HARARE 903, B) HARARE 856, C) HARARE 767,
D) HARARE 655

CLASSIFIED BY CHARGE D'AFFAIRES EARL M. IRVING FOR REASONS
1.5 (B) AND (D).

SUMMARY

11. (C) THE OPPOSITION MOVEMENT FOR DEMOCRATIC CHANGE (MDC) HAS MOVED TO ADDRESS SERIOUS ORGANIZATIONAL PROBLEMS BY HIRING A RESPECTED CIVIL SOCIETY ACTIVIST TO BE NATIONAL COORDINATOR TO MANAGE THE PARTY'S AFFAIRS AND A PUBLIC RELATIONS PROFESSIONAL TO RUN ITS INFORMATION DEPARTMENT. THE PARTY IS WORKING HARD TO DEVISE A RANGE OF THOROUGHLY VETTED POLICIES, AND TO DISSEMINATE THEM WIDELY. HOWEVER, LACK OF RESOURCES AND DISTRUST BETWEEN THE PARTY'S YOUNG AND OLD MEMBERS REMAIN SERIOUS PROBLEMS. DESPITE INTENSIFYING INTIMIDATION AND HARASSMENT OF ITS SENIOR LEADERS, THE MDC IS ACTIVELY PREPARING FOR THE UPCOMING PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN. THE RECENT ELECTION OF A PRO-MDC SLATE TO THE LEADERSHIP OF THE ZIMBABWE CONGRESS OF TRADE UNIONS (ZCTU) PROVIDES A SIGNIFICANT BOOST TO THE ELECTORAL
CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 HARARE 00930 01 OF 04 061550Z
STRATEGY OF THE OPPOSITION PARTY, WHICH ALSO IS MOVING ENERGETICALLY TO COURT RURAL VOTERS, HISTORICALLY A ZANU-PF STRONGHOLD. END SUMMARY.

12. (U) WE HAVE MET RECENTLY WITH A VARIETY OF SENIOR OFFICIALS OF THE OPPOSITION MOVEMENT FOR DEMOCRATIC CHANGE (MDC), INCLUDING DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL GIFT CHIMANIKIRE, MPS AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS TRUDY STEVENSON, DAVID COLTART, PAUL NYATHI, AND TENDAI BITI, AND ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT GANDI MUDZINGWA. THEY PROVIDED KEEN INSIGHTS ON THE MDC'S INTERNAL DYNAMICS AND ITS PRIORITIES, INCLUDING THE PARTY'S STRATEGY FOR THE UPCOMING PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN.

RESTRUCTURING

13. (C) THE LACK OF AN EFFECTIVE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE HAS SERIOUSLY HAMPERED THE MDC'S ABILITY TO MAINTAIN INTERNAL COHESIVENESS, LET ALONE BUILD ON ITS ACHIEVEMENTS IN LAST JUNE'S PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS. IN A FEBRUARY 27 CONVERSATION WITH POLITICAL SECTION CHIEF, MP DAVID COLTART DESCRIBED THE PARTY'S INFORMATION DEPARTMENT AS A "DISASTER"

AND THE ACCOUNTING DEPARTMENT AS A "MESS." HIS COLLEAGUE TRUDY STEVENSON AGREED, POINTING OUT TO US ON FEBRUARY 23 THAT EVEN SENIOR OFFICIALS IN THE PARTY ARE NOT KEPT IN THE LOOP ON MAJOR PARTY EVENTS. FOR INSTANCE, SHE HAD HEARD THAT MDC RALLIES WOULD BE HELD THE FOLLOWING DAY IN HARARE, BUT SHE, ALTHOUGH AN EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBER, HAD NOT BEEN INFORMED WHERE OR WHEN THEY WOULD BE HELD.

14. (C) THE MDC HAS RECENTLY MOVED TO ADDRESS THIS SERIOUS
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PAGE 04 HARARE 00930 01 OF 04 061550Z
SHORTCOMING, HOWEVER, BY HIRING A NATIONAL COORDINATOR WHO WILL, QUITE LITERALLY, COORDINATE AND ALL OF THE PARTY'S ACTIVITIES. (COMMENT: THE PERSON SELECTED FOR THIS POSITION, ISAAC MAPOSA, DEMONSTRATED AN IMPRESSIVE TALENT FOR MARSHALING PEOPLE AND RESOURCES WHEN HE WAS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL CONSTITUTIONAL ASSEMBLY'S EFFORT IN 1999 TO DRAFT A NEW CONSTITUTION. HE IS WELL-LIKED AND WELL-RESPECTED, AND ALL OF THE MDC MEMBERS WITH WHOM WE SPOKE WERE CONFIDENT THAT HE WOULD BE ABLE TO IMPOSE SOME DISCIPLINE ON A PARTY WHICH SORELY NEEDS IT. MAPOSA REPORTEDLY TOOK UP HIS NEW DUTIES IN EARLY MARCH, IN SPITE OF UNRESOLVED QUESTIONS ABOUT REMUNERATION. END COMMENT.)

15. (C) STEVENSON TOLD US THAT THE MDC PLANS TO HOLD REGULAR POLICY RETREATS ON PARTICULAR ISSUES. THE FIRST ONE -- HELD IN LATE JANUARY -- FOCUSED ON THE ECONOMY AND LAND; THE PARTY'S NATIONAL EXECUTIVE, MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT, AND PROVINCIAL CHAIRPERSONS ALL PARTICIPATED. THE OBJECTIVES OF THE RETREATS, STEVENSON STRESSED, ARE TO THOROUGHLY VET POLICY POSITIONS BEFORE THEY ARE ANNOUNCED PUBLICLY AND TO ENSURE THAT MPS AND OTHER SENIOR PARTY OFFICIALS DELIVER A CONSISTENT MESSAGE. THE PARTY'S POSITIONS WILL SUBSEQUENTLY BE EXPLAINED IN REGULAR MEETINGS TO CONSTITUENTS AROUND THE COUNTRY.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL PTQ5829

PAGE 01 HARARE 00930 02 OF 04 061551Z
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PAGE 02 HARARE 00930 02 OF 04 061551Z
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16. (C) STEVENSON LAMENTED THAT THE PARTY'S INFORMATION AND PUBLICITY DEPARTMENT HAS BEEN INEFFECTUAL, IN LARGE PART BECAUSE IT WAS RUN BY A LAWYER -- MP LEARNMORE JONGWE -- WHO HAS NO ACADEMIC PREPARATION OR PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE IN PUBLIC RELATIONS. SHE EXPRESSED HOPE, HOWEVER, THAT THE RECENT HIRING OF A PERSON WITH A GRADUATE DEGREE IN COMMUNICATIONS WOULD HELP THE PARTY SHAPE AND DISSEMINATE A CONSISTENT, EFFECTIVE MESSAGE AND DEVELOP A DYNAMIC PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGY.

LACK OF RESOURCES

17. (C) A LACK OF RESOURCES CONTINUES TO POSE A SERIOUS IMPEDIMENT FOR THE MDC. MDC MP AND DIRECTOR OF ELECTIONS PAUL NYATHI SAID THE PARTY LITERALLY HAS ALMOST NO MONEY IN THE BANK. ONE REASON THE PARTY FINDS ITSELF IN SUCH DIRE FINANCIAL STRAITS IS THE GOVERNMENT'S STEADFAST REFUSAL TO RELEASE FUNDS TO WHICH THE MDC IS ENTITLED UNDER THE POLITICAL PARTIES ACT, BY VIRTUE OF ITS STRONG SHOWING IN LAST JUNE'S PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS. ON FEBRUARY 22, THE GOVERNMENT FINALLY AGREED TO HONOR ITS OBLIGATION UNDER THE LAW AND RELEASE WITHIN 30 DAYS 47

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 HARARE 00930 02 OF 04 061551Z MILLION ZIMBABWEAN DOLLARS (APPROXIMATELY U.S. \$630,000) TO THE MDC. MDC MPS DAVID COLTART AND PAUL NYATHI BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL FIND WAYS TO AVOID HONORING THIS COMMITMENT. WHY, THEY BOTH ASKED, WOULD A GOVERNMENT WHICH HAS DEMONSTRATED DISDAIN FOR THE RULE OF LAW PROVIDE THE MDC WITH A FINANCIAL WINDFALL AS BOTH PARTIES GEAR UP FOR A PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION? MANY OF THE MDC'S DOMESTIC SOURCES OF REVENUE HAVE DRIED UP, TESTAMENT TO THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE GOVERNMENT'S CAMPAIGN OF INTIMIDATION AGAINST THE PARTY'S SUPPORTERS. COLTART AND NYATHI ARE PLANNING A FUNDRAISING TRIP IN LATE MARCH TO LONDON, NEW YORK, AND WASHINGTON, WHICH WILL TARGET PRIMARILY ZIMBABWEAN EXPATRIATES.

INCREASING THREATS/HARASSMENT

18. (C) THE MDC'S EFFORT TO TRANSFORM ITSELF FROM A PROTEST MOVEMENT INTO A GENUINE, EFFECTIVE POLITICAL PARTY HAS BEEN HAMPERED BY INTENSIFYING GOVERNMENT-SANCTIONED HARASSMENT AND INTIMIDATION. DURING THE LAST MONTH, SENIOR MDC OFFICIALS -- INCLUDING PRESIDENT MORGAN TSVANGIRAI AND VICE PRESIDENT GIBSON SIBANDA -- HAVE BEEN CHARGED WITH INCITING VIOLENCE (REFS C AND D), WHILE SECURITY SECRETARY JOB SIKHALA AND HIS PREGNANT WIFE WERE TWICE BEATEN IN THEIR HOME BY MEN WEARING ARMY UNIFORMS. IN ADDITION, FOUR MEN IN CIVILIAN CLOTHES ARRIVED AT SIKHALA'S HOUSE IN A POLICE VEHICLE AT MIDNIGHT ON FEBRUARY 25 THREATENING TO ARREST SIKHALA, BUT HE AND HIS FAMILY HID IN A NEARBY FIELD AFTER BEING WARNED BY THEIR GUARD. THE UNKNOWN MEN BEAT SIKHALA'S GUARD AND FIRED AT LEAST ONE SHOT AT HIM AFTER HE MANAGED TO

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PAGE 04 HARARE 00930 02 OF 04 061551Z FLEE. ON FEBRUARY 21, FOUR MDC OFFICIALS FROM VICTORIA FALLS WERE ARRESTED AND CHARGED UNDER THE COLONIAL-ERA LAW AND ORDER MAINTENANCE ACT (LOMA) WITH INCITING PUBLIC VIOLENCE AT A FEBRUARY 4 MDC RALLY. THE FILING OF THESE CHARGES THREE WEEKS AFTER THE ALLEGED CRIME -- FLASHING RED CARDS DURING THE RALLY -- LIKELY WAS MOTIVATED BY A DESIRE TO ENSURE THAT THE MDC WOULD NOT TRY TO DISRUPT PRESIDENT MUGABE'S 77TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION IN VICTORIA FALLS ON FEBRUARY 24. IN ADDITION, RUMORS CONTINUE TO CIRCULATE OF THE EXISTENCE OF A DEATH LIST CONTAINING THE NAMES OF SENIOR MDC OFFICIALS (REF B).

INTERNAL FACTIONS

19. (C) TENSIONS BETWEEN THE MDC'S SHONA AND NDEBELE MEMBERS CONTINUE TO SIMMER, BUT THE STRAINS BETWEEN THE PARTY'S OLDER AND YOUNGER MEMBERS SEEM TO BE THE MOST SERIOUS. ACCORDING TO STEVENSON, SOME OF THE PARTY'S YOUNG STARS USE UNNECESSARILY SHARP RHETORIC AT PUBLIC RALLIES PORTRAYING THE CURRENT POLITICAL STRUGGLE AS PITTING THE YOUNGER GENERATION -- REPRESENTED BY THE MDC -- VERSUS THE OLDER, DISCREDITED GENERATION -- REPRESENTED BY ZANU-PF. AN ADDITIONAL CAUSE FOR CONCERN, ACCORDING TO STEVENSON, IS THAT YOUNG, SOPHISTICATED MDC CADRES STICK LIKE GLUE TO TSVANGIRAI. THEY EXPERTLY PLAY ON THE MDC PRESIDENT'S SENSITIVITY ABOUT

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL PTQ5830

PAGE 01 HARARE 00930 03 OF 04 061551Z ACTION AF-00

| INFO | LOG-00 | NP-00 | AID-00 | AMAD-00 | ACQ-00 | CIAE-00 | DINT-00 |
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CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 HARARE 00930 03 OF 04 061551Z
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PINS](#) [PINR](#) [ZI](#) [MDC](#)

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HIS LACK OF HIGHER EDUCATION TO MAINTAIN THEIR ACCESS TO HIM AND TO PREVENT OTHERS IN THE PARTY FROM GETTING TOO CLOSE. AFTER OLDER MEMBERS OF THE PARTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE RECENTLY COMPLAINED TO TSVANGIRAI THAT THE VEHEMENCE OF HIS YOUNG GATEKEEPERS WAS BECOMING A PROBLEM, THE MDC LEADER AGREED TO MAKE SOME CHANGES. STEVENSON, WHO IS PROBABLY IN HER 50S, DESCRIBED FOUR YOUNG MDC MEMBERS WHOM SHE DOES NOT TRUST AS BEING POSSIBLE ZANU-PF PLANTS -- MPS TAFADZWA MUSEKIWA, JOB SIKHALA, AND LEARNMORE JONGWE (THE PARTY'S SPOKESMAN), AND NATIONAL YOUTH LEADER NELSON CHAMISA. ASKED WHETHER SHE TRUSTED TSVANGIRAI'S PERSONAL ASSISTANT GANDI MUDZINGWA, STEVENSON REPLIED, "I DON'T TRUST ANYONE." (COMMENT: WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE TO SUBSTANTIATE STEVENSON'S SUSPICIONS ONE WAY OR ANOTHER. WE CAN SAY WITH A FAIR DEGREE OF CONFIDENCE THAT HER DISTRUST OF CERTAIN YOUNGER MEMBERS IS A RESULT OF ZANU-PF'S STRATEGY TO SOW DOUBT AND DISCORD WITHIN THE OPPOSITION PARTY. END COMMENT).

GEARING UP FOR A PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

[¶](#)10. (C) DESPITE THE CHALLENGES ELABORATED ABOVE, THE MDC IS PREPARING ENERGETICALLY FOR THE UPCOMING PRESIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 HARARE 00930 03 OF 04 061551Z
ELECTION. ACCORDING TO MDC DIRECTOR FOR ELECTIONS PAUL NYATHI, THE PARTY HAS FORMED A "HUSH-HUSH" NATIONAL ELECTION DIRECTORATE IN HARARE THAT IS PLOTTING STRATEGY. THE MDC HAS BEEN HOLDING WELL-ATTENDED RALLIES NATIONWIDE, WHERE IT IS ENCOURAGING PEOPLE TO HANG TOUGH IN THE FACE OF VIOLENCE AND INTIMIDATION, AND TO VOTE, AS THE PRIZE THIS TIME IS MUCH MORE VALUABLE THAN LAST JUNE'S. IN A MARCH 1 MEETING WITH POLITICAL SECTION CHIEF, MP FOR HARARE EAST TENDAI BITI WAS IN UNUSUALLY HIGH SPIRITS, NOTING THAT TURNOUT FOR HIS CONSTITUENCY MEETINGS AND THOSE OF MANY OF HIS PARTY COLLEAGUES HAD INCREASED DRAMATICALLY DURING THE PAST MONTH. ACCORDING TO NYATHI, THE MDC HOPES TO LAUNCH OFFICIALLY ITS PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN IN THE TOWNSHIP OF CHITUNGWIZA, WHERE SECURITY FORCES HAVE BEEN BEATING SUSPECTED OPPOSITION SUPPORTERS, "TO GIVE PEOPLE COURAGE."

[¶](#)11. (C) IN EARLY MARCH, MDC ACTIVISTS FROM RURAL AREAS WERE PLANNING TO GATHER IN HARARE TO STRATEGIZE ON HOW TO BOLSTER SUPPORT IN THE RURAL AREAS. IN THE MEANTIME, THE PARTY IS DISSEMINATING ITS MESSAGE THROUGH RURAL CHURCHES AND RURAL-BASED MEMBERS OF THE ZCTU. THE RECENT ELECTION OF A PRO-MDC SLATE TO THE ZCTU LEADERSHIP, NYATHI POINTED OUT, WAS CRUCIAL TO THE MDC'S ABILITY TO PENETRATE THE RURAL AREAS. IN LIGHT OF THE GOVERNMENT'S ONGOING CAMPAIGN OF INTIMIDATION AGAINST COMMERCIAL FARM OWNERS AND THEIR WORKERS, THE 120,000-STRONG FARM WORKERS UNION REPRESENTS ESPECIALLY FERTILE GROUND FOR THE MDC. THE OPPOSITION PARTY IS ALSO PAYING SUPPORTERS LIVING IN URBAN AREAS TO RETURN TO THEIR RURAL VILLAGES TO CAMPAIGN QUIETLY. (COMMENT: WE DO NOT KNOW THE SOURCE OF THE MONEY WITH WHICH THIS IS OSTENSIBLY BEING DONE. END COMMENT). THIS IS POTENTIALLY AN EFFECTIVE APPROACH,

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PAGE 04 HARARE 00930 03 OF 04 061551Z
AS RURAL RESIDENTS WILL BE MUCH MORE WILLING TO LISTEN TO A FAMILIAR FACE, WHO IS LESS LIKELY TO ATTRACT THE ATTENTION -- AND WRATH -- OF ZANU-PF THUGS. SO FAR, 52 WARDS HAVE BEEN "ASSIGNED" AN URBAN-DWELLING RESIDENT. (NOTE: EACH OF ZIMBABWE'S 120 ELECTORAL CONSTITUENCIES COMPRISES BETWEEN FIVE AND TWENTY WARDS. END NOTE.)

[¶](#)12. (C) ACCORDING TO NYATHI, THE MDC IS "ASSURED" OF WINNING THE PROVINCES OF MATABELELAND NORTH AND SOUTH, MANICALAND, AND MIDLANDS. MASHONALAND EAST, WEST, AND CENTRAL WERE PROBLEMATIC, AS GOVERNMENT-SPONSORED INTIMIDATION THERE HAS

BEEN SIGNIFICANT. HOWEVER, NYATHI BELIEVED THERE IS ROOM FOR THE MDC TO INCREASE ITS SUPPORT IN THOSE TRADITIONAL STRONGHOLDS OF THE RULING PARTY, AS THE SEATS WON BY ZANU-PF IN JUNE WERE BY VERY HIGH MARGINS, WHILE TURNOUT WAS LOW IN THOSE CONSTITUENCIES WON BY THE MDC. NYATHI SAID MASVINGO IS THE KEY BATTLEGROUND PROVINCE, CALLING IT "OUR FLORIDA." THE SOUTHERN PROVINCE HAS THE LARGEST POPULATION AND IS POLITICALLY ASTUTE. IN ADDITION, THE RECENT EXPULSION OF LONG-TIME ZANU-PF STALWART AND MASVINGO "SUPREMO" EDDISON ZVOBGO FROM THE POLITBURO HAS ANGERED MANY OF HIS SUPPORTERS AND COULD LEAD THEM TO SHIFT THEIR ALLEGIANCE TO THE MDC.

¶13. (C) THERE WAS NOT CONSENSUS AMONG OUR MDC INTERLOCUTORS ABOUT WHETHER PRESIDENT MUGABE WOULD CALL AN EARLY ELECTION,

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL PTQ5834

PAGE 01 HARARE 00930 04 OF 04 061551Z
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PAGE 02 HARARE 00930 04 OF 04 061551Z
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PRIOR TO JANUARY 1, 2002. COLTART AND NYATHI WERE CONVINCED THAT THE RECENT INTENSIFICATION OF VIOLENCE AND INTIMIDATION -- AGAINST THE JUDICIARY, THE INDEPENDENT MEDIA, THE MDC, AND ORDINARY CITIZENS IN HARARE'S HIGH-DENSITY SUBURBS -- SUGGESTS AN EARLY ELECTION. ON THE OTHER HAND, TSVANGIRAI'S ASSISTANT GANDI MUDZINGWA BELIEVES MUGABE WILL NOT STAND AGAIN, AS HE KNOWS HE CANNOT WIN, AND NEEDS TIME TO GROOM EITHER SPEAKER OF PARLIAMENT EMMERSON MNANGAGWA OR FINANCE MINISTER SIMBA MAKONI AS HIS SUCCESSOR. TRUDY STEVENSON DOUBTED THE POSSIBILITY OF AN EARLY ELECTION, AS ZANU-PF WAS NOT WELL-ORGANIZED ENOUGH TO PULL OFF A VICTORY IN SO SHORT A TIME.

ELECTORAL CHALLENGES

¶14. (C) THE MDC'S CHALLENGES OF THE RESULTS IN 37 ELECTORAL CONSTITUENCIES ARE PROCEEDING APACE IN THE HIGH COURT. FOUR CASES HAVE NOW BEEN COMPLETED, BUT THE JUDGES HAVE NOT YET RENDERED THEIR DECISIONS. IN FACT, MOST OBSERVERS EXPECT THEM TO RESERVE JUDGMENT UNTIL ALL 37 CASES HAVE BEEN HEARD, MEANING WE ARE UNLIKELY TO SEE A FINAL RESOLUTION FOR MANY MORE MONTHS. COLTART SAID THE INITIAL CASES DID NOT GO PARTICULARLY WELL -- SOME OF THE MDC'S WITNESSES WERE TOO

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 HARARE 00930 04 OF 04 061551Z
AGGRESSIVE OR UNABLE TO EXPLAIN HOLES IN THEIR STORIES -- BUT THE CASES CURRENTLY BEING HEARD ARE EXPOSING SIGNIFICANT EVIDENCE OF INTIMIDATION AND ELECTORAL FRAUD. EVEN IF THE JUDGES DO NOT ULTIMATELY SET ASIDE THE RESULTS IN ANY OF THE 37 CONSTITUENCIES, THE CASES AT LEAST WILL HAVE FOCUSED THE WORLD'S ATTENTION ON THE SERIOUS HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES THAT OCCURRED DURING THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION CAMPAIGN.

COMMENT

15. (C) THE MDC APPEARS TO BE REGAINING SOME OF THE POLITICAL MOMENTUM IT CEDED TO ZANU-PF IN THE MONTHS AFTER LAST JUNE'S PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION IN SPITE OF THE GOVERNMENT'S INTIMIDATION CAMPAIGN -- OR PERHAPS BECAUSE OF IT. THERE IS A SENSE OF EXCITEMENT AMONG ITS SENIOR OFFICIALS THAT WE HAVE NOT SEEN SINCE THE EUPHORIA OF THEIR ELECTORAL SHOWING LAST JUNE. THE HIRING OF A NATIONAL COORDINATOR AND A PUBLIC RELATIONS PROFESSIONAL, ALONG WITH THE DEVELOPMENT OF A RIGOROUS INTERNAL POLICY-VETTING SHOP, WILL HELP ADDRESS SOME OF THE PARTY'S STRUCTURAL WEAKNESSES, ESPECIALLY THE ABSENCE OF CLEAR POLICY POSITIONS AND INEFFECTUAL INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION. THE NATIONAL COORDINATOR LIKELY WILL BE ABLE TO USE HIS IMPRESSIVE MANAGEMENT AND INTERPERSONAL SKILLS TO ALLEVIATE SOME OF THE PARTY'S FACTIONAL TENSIONS. THE MDC IS BEGINNING TO SHOW SIGNS OF POLITICAL MATURITY AS WELL, BY REACHING OUT TO THE DIPLOMATIC HEADS OF MISSION (REF A) AND ADVOCATING THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY'S CONSTRUCTIVE ENGAGEMENT WITH THE MUGABE GOVERNMENT, AS OPPOSED TO IMPOSITION OF SANCTIONS. THE LACK OF RESOURCES, HOWEVER,

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 HARARE 00930 04 OF 04 061551Z
WILL CONTINUE TO POSE A REAL PROBLEM FOR THE PARTY, AND THERE IS NO EASY SOLUTION TO IT IN SIGHT. END COMMENT.

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